

Organizational Partiality and Relational Equality
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Abstract: If you are a member of an organization, how should you be committed to its aims and values? I argue that relational equality requires organizational superiors – those endowed with higher authority within organizations – generally to make decisions on the basis of pertinent organizational aims and values, even when there are competing extra-organizational moral considerations. I start with cases of objectionable managerial moral activism, in which superiors take the moral law into their own hands, shirking organizational aims and values for the sake of extra-organizational moral considerations. Since these managerial decisions enforce moral norms on subordinates, and since the moral norms that superiors enforce do not correspond to reasonably expected organizational aims and values (at least those that are compatible with relational equality), the superiors thereby treat subordinates as moral inferiors. This implies that relational equality requires an important form of organizational partiality of organizational superiors.

Keywords: relational equality, partiality, vigilantism, organizational authority, social hierarchy

1. If you are a member of an organization, such as a business, university, or church, how should you be committed to its aims and values? In particular, should you give them weight in your decision-making even when they are outweighed by competing, external moral considerations – those not contained in your organization’s aims and values?¹ This is a question about organizational partiality, which is a subspecies of what some partiality theorists call “group partiality.”² Organizations, in the relevant sense, are groups that (i) are at least partially voluntary³ and subordinate to state institutions, (ii) are structured by Hartian secondary rules,⁴ and (iii) according to those secondary rules, involve some centralized decision-making. It is worth addressing the above

¹ In speaking of organizational aims and values, I have in mind the aims and values that generally characterize an organization’s decision-making and culture. More on this below.

² This question is importantly distinct from, and I think more fundamental than, the more commonly discussed issue of whether and when members of groups should place more weight on each other’s interests, as associates, than the interests of those outside the group. For, some organizations have, as among their guiding values, a self-sacrificial principle of placing more weight on the interests of (some of) those outside the organization.

³ By “partially voluntary,” I mean that someone’s ongoing membership in the organization reflects their willingness or acceptance of their place in the organization, even if they did not choose to enter the organization. This matters because, in the cases I wish to examine, organizational superiors are required to exhibit partiality in their decision-making toward organizational aims and values partly because of their subordinates’ ongoing acceptance of organizational authority.

⁴ Secondary rules are rules that formalize, and create procedures and/or offices for revising and enforcing, the primary rules of a group. See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), at 94ff.

question about organizational partiality on its own because, as we will see, how organizations embody and enforce their aims and values involves distinctive claims of authority not present in more informal groups. And organizations play a distinctive, central role in structuring contemporary human life, given the kinds of goods they make possible and moral risks they carry. Questions about organizations should be top of mind for moral and political philosophers.

Our question is made pressing in cases where organizational superiors – those granted higher authority within organizations⁵ – fail to exhibit partiality toward their organization’s aims and values in their decision-making. They take the moral law into their own hands, as it were, and shirk the organizational values and aims that pertain to their decision-making for the sake of extra-organizational moral considerations. Call these cases of “managerial moral activism.” For instance, in July 2018, the cofounder and chief culture officer (CCO) of the New York-based company WeWork, Miguel McKelvey, announced a series of decisions aimed at reducing his employees’ consumption of meat.⁶ These included banning meat from all company-sponsored events and ceasing to reimburse employees for meat-containing meals. The reasons cited for these decisions concerned the impact of meat-consumption on the environment, especially in worsening the effects of climate change. As McKelvey saw it, even if employees disagreed with the changes, it was the responsibility of corporate superiors such as himself to use their corporate power to “move the needle” on pressing moral issues, such as climate change. At the time, WeWork did not appear to have any organizational aims and values concerned with climate change.

Or consider cases in which employees have been fired for social media posts or political speech that their managers deemed morally offensive, but not in ways clearly proscribed by their organization’s aims and values. For instance, a bank employee in Texas was fired after she posted

⁵ This is the term I will use to refer to any organizational official endowed with higher (and thus asymmetrical) authority, as a part of the organization’s centralized decision-making structure.

⁶ See David Gelles, “Memo from the Boss: You’re a Vegetarian Now,” *The New York Times* (July 25, 2018).

boudoir photos she took with her partner on Facebook, and one of the reasons allegedly given was that the posts were “inappropriate.”⁷ A woman in Virginia was fired after she posted a photo of herself flipping off a motorcade carrying U.S. President Donald Trump, and similarly one reason cited was that the photo was “obscene.”⁸ (Other cases of this sort abound, involving a wide variety of putatively offensive forms of employee expression.⁹)

There are a number of moral objections we might raise about these examples of managerial moral activism, many of which have nothing to do with organizational partiality. But I will argue that we can easily bracket these objections and that, once we do, we are left with a serious concern about superiors failing to exhibit a justified form of organizational partiality. This concern derives from (i) the kind of authority that organizational superiors purport to wield over subordinates, and (ii) the constraints that relational equality places on the exercise of such authority. Of course, this will leave open questions about how organizational inferiors, i.e., organizational members in their role as subordinates, should be committed to organizational values.

What will follow is the claim that relational equality requires an important form of organizational partiality from organizational superiors. It places a partiality constraint on their pursuit of moral values, specifically, the requirement that they give as little weight to extra-organizational values as is compatible with not ignoring organizational aims and values, so that the latter can form the basis of their decisions. This matters at a time when organizational superiors face

⁷ See Krista Torres, “This Woman Said Her Company Fired Her After Her Body-Positive Photo Shoot Went Viral,” *Buzzfeed* (September 29, 2017). In this case, one complication is that the post happened outside of working hours, but even if she had posted at work – while, say, on break at her company computer, or otherwise within company parameters for how time at work can be used – she still would have run afoul of whatever standard for “inappropriate” posting was being invoked in terminating her employment. I discuss this and related complications in section 2.

⁸ See Christine Hauser, “Cyclist Lost Her Job After Raising Middle Finger at Trump’s Motorcade,” *The New York Times* (November 6, 2017).

⁹ For a helpful overview, see Brady Robards and Darren Graf, ““How a Facebook Post Can Cost You Your Job”: News Coverage of Employment Terminations Following Social Media Disclosures, from Racist Cops to Queer Teachers,” *Social Media + Society* (2022): 1-13. See also Vikram Bhargava, “Firm Response to Mass Outrage: Technology, Blame, and Employment,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 163 (2020): 379-400, who raises a separate worry about how, in some of these cases, employers “pile on” the widespread blame directed at employees following their offensive posts.

increasing pressure on many fronts, including from shareholders (focused on “ESG” criteria), trustees, customers (threatening boycotts), students, and activists to pursue environmental and social goals, and even to participate more actively in politics.¹⁰ We need to scrutinize the managerial moral activism that tends to result from such pressure. This should be of interest to partiality theorists, because it establishes a deep form of justified group partiality that does not rest on how a group’s members do and/or should value, or are justifiably committed to, their group membership.¹¹ And it should be of interest to relational egalitarians, because it demonstrates an important way that relational equality’s demands, while impersonal, are not impartial.

2. To bring out the concern about organizational partiality in the above cases of managerial moral activism, it is helpful to first bracket a number of other, more peripheral moral objections they raise. These are objections about moral correctness, avoiding hypocrisy, imposing fair (or proportional) burdens (or punishments), not being intrusive or violating individual liberty, paternalism, and respecting reasonable expectations. Once we bracket these, we will see that a more central concern remains about justified organizational partiality.

The first and perhaps most obvious, but ultimately peripheral, objection that might be raised about the above cases, especially those in which employees were fired for social media posts that managers deemed offensive, is that the managers’ moral judgments were incorrect. The social media posts in question were not actually or seriously morally offensive. While plausible in some cases, this objection clearly does not cover the full range of examples in which organizational superiors can and do engage in worrisome forms of managerial moral activism. Oftentimes they are correct in judging

¹⁰ By one count, in the United States, shareholder resolutions focused on environmental and social goals have increased by 12% over the past decade and support for them amongst shareholders has increased 40%. See “Shareholder Proposal Fact Sheet” from the Sustainable Investments Institute, found at: <https://siinstitute.org/reports.html>. [redacted].

¹¹ See, e.g., Samuel Scheffler, “Morality and Reasonable Partiality,” in *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships, and the Wider World*, ed. B. Feltham and J. Cottingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117-121.

that extra-organizational considerations are morally weighty. For instance, WeWork's McKelvey was right about the moral importance of mitigating climate change-related harms.

But even when we think organizational superiors are correct, it is natural to make the following complaint about their moral activism: "Who are *they* – the superiors – to decide that those moral values should be determinative for *them* – the other members of the organization?" or, more simply, "Who are they to impose those values on them?" This complaint covers a number of importantly distinct moral objections. First, it may level an objection about hypocrisy. Superiors are unwilling to bear the burdens they are deciding that their employees should bear – McKelvey and other WeWork executives made liberal use of a corporate jet while pushing climate-friendly dietary policies on employees¹² – or they have not disavowed for themselves the kind of wrongdoing they are condemning in employees. While important to consider, this objection is, like the first, quite limited in its coverage of objectionable cases of managerial moral activism.¹³ Sometimes superiors are non-hypocritical in their commitment to, and enforcement of, the extra-organizational moral considerations they invoke. Even so, their moral activism may remain sensibly subject to (some version of) the "who are they" complaint.

A second version of this complaint is about proportionality: Organizational superiors are imposing burdens or punishments that are excessive relative to the moral responsibility that subordinates bear for the moral failure in question. Perhaps the employees in the social media cases did post something offensive, and their superiors were not hypocritical in confronting them about this, but the punishment the superiors imposed – terminating employment – is disproportionate to

¹² See Thomas Pallini, "WeWork's \$60 Million Private Jet Is now on the Market," *Business Insider* (February 19, 2020).

¹³ Although, of course, some moral theorists dispute the significance of hypocrisy complaints and, in particular, how they bear on standing to blame. See Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings* (Oxford University Press, 2013), at 96ff, Kyle Fritz and Daniel Miller, "Hypocrisy and the Standing to Blame," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 99 (2018): 118-139, and Patrick Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame," *Noûs* 53 (2019): 347-374. And for discussion of how concerns about moral hypocrisy overlap with the requirements of relational equality I unpack later on, see Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, *Relational Egalitarianism: Living as Equals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), ch. 4.

the offense.¹⁴ On this reading, the “who are they” complaint is best specified as, “Who are they to” – or perhaps “How dare they” – “be so harsh?” And, once again, this moral objection is very limited in its coverage of objectionable managerial moral activism. Sometimes the punishment that superiors impose on the basis of extra-organizational considerations fits the crime. Or sometimes, as in the WeWork case, the burden imposed is proportional to the extra-organizational moral considerations being invoked (e.g., about mitigating climate harms). Indeed, it may not be burdensome enough, in this respect. No complaint about disproportionality is apt in many cases.

This brings us to a third version of the “who are they” complaint, about intrusiveness. This complaint arises when an organizational superior’s moral activism involves the discovery and consideration of facts about subordinates that are relatively personal (or private) and have not been disclosed. Sometimes this complaint is put in terms of organizational boundaries: Superiors can consider facts about what subordinates do *at work* but not what they do *outside of work*. “None of your business!” is what we feel inclined to say to the manager who monitors an employee’s personal social media feed for offensive posts. While apt in many of the social media termination cases, this complaint does not cover cases in which a subordinate’s social media posting is made public (e.g., on Twitter), much less the many other cases of managerial moral activism, such as the WeWork case, in which there is no objectionable intrusion whatsoever.

Perhaps what lies behind the intrusiveness objection is a concern for the individual liberty of employees. What is most worrisome about managers promoting moral causes is the prospect of infringing on employee liberty by, e.g., coercing them, or purporting to settle rightfully personal employee matters. As with the intrusiveness objection, though, this line of thought does not promise to help explain why McKelvey’s actions are objectionable, since he did not coerce employees to not eat meat, nor did he attempt to influence what they eat on their own time and dime.

¹⁴ For a closely related concern about excessive blame in firing employees in these cases, see Bhargava, “Mass Outrage.”

This raises the question of why we should suspect, as I do, that the full range of cases of managerial moral activism discussed above involve morally objectionable conduct on the part of managers. In response, I want to lean on the word “suspect.” My starting point here is the thought that, when we characterize cases of managerial moral activism as I did above, and once we set aside worries about moral correctness, there is a very general, intuitive moral complaint that arises about the conduct of the superiors: “Who are they to impose their values on their employees?” We may not, in the end, be able to make sense of this as a general complaint about managerial moral activism; we may be left with only a partial substantiation, such as what the intrusiveness or liberty-based interpretations suggest. But it is worth first seeing if we can do better.

It is natural to turn next to a complaint about paternalism – a fourth version of the “who are they” complaint. It focuses on how organizational superiors purport to “know better” than their employees about what the employees should do or care about. I have in mind here theories of paternalism on which the distinctive wrong of paternalism consists in displacing someone else’s moral (or more broadly normative) judgments with one’s own.¹⁵ Perhaps this is what we see in managerial moral activism: Superiors displace the moral judgments of their employees with their own moral judgments about, e.g., the importance of changing one’s diet to avoid climate change harms or avoiding offensive expression. They act as though they know better than their employees. This would amount to treating their employees paternalistically. But notice that a superior need not be paternalistic toward their employees when displaying a seemingly worrisome form of moral

¹⁵ In describing paternalism in these broad terms, I follow the judgment-focused accounts offered by Seana Shiffrin, “Paternalism, Unconscionability Doctrine, and Accommodation,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 29 (2000): 205–250, and Nico Cornell, “A Third Theory of Paternalism,” *Michigan Law Review* 113 (2015): 1295–1336, in contrast with theorists such as Carl Fox, “What’s Special about the Insult of Paternalism?” *Law and Philosophy* 38 (2019): 313–334, who take paternalism to be distinguished by its focus on promoting the interests of the targets of paternalism. I leave open the question of whether acts of paternalism are objectionable in virtue of their intention or instead their intention-independent features (for one’s actions could displace someone else’s judgments with one’s own without one’s intending to do so). This is a central point of disagreement between Shiffrin and Cornell.

activism. For, rather than displace subordinates' moral judgments, a superior's moral activism might elevate them. Perhaps the superior overhears their subordinates expressing concerns about climate change or offensive expression, and this gets them thinking: *I could do something about that!* In this case, the superior is not asserting their own moral judgment in place of their subordinates'. But still, we might object to their moral activism with (some version of) the "who are you" complaint.

The fifth version of the "who are you" complaint that I think we can bracket, but that gets us closest to the moral objection that we should focus on, is a complaint about subordinates' reasonable expectations about the terms of their organizational membership. They naturally feel a bit duped, as though there was some sort of bait-and-switch, when they find themselves directed by a superior who enacts a different set of values and aims from those that they have reasonably come to expect of their organization. "This isn't what I thought I was getting into," they complain, "Who are you to change the terms on us?"

This complaint is mistaken to suggest that organizational superiors have no justifiable claim to settle some of the aims and values their organization promotes. There are *prima facie* good reasons to think they do have such a claim. First, there are important goods that we can attain only by allowing for hierarchically-organized organizations – those whose secondary rules centralize some of the organization's decision-making. These goods include (but are not limited to) the efficiency achieved by solving transaction costs problems, taking advantage of economies of scale, and resolving conflicts between the interests and values of different organizational subgroups.¹⁶ The resulting organizational hierarchies plausibly grant superiors wide-ranging decision-making authority that, absent further argument, includes the authority to decide some of the aims and values an

¹⁶ For a couple of different, influential views in this vein, focused on firms in particular, see Ronald Coase, "The Nature of the Firm," *Economica* 16 (1937): 386-405, and Armen Alchian and Harold Demsetz, "Production, Information Costs, and Economic Organization," *American Economic Review* 62 (1972): 777-795.

organization promotes.¹⁷ Second, the exercise of such authority cannot be made unjustified simply by superiors' pursuit of morally worthy aims. If it is justifiable for organizational superiors to have authority to settle some of the aims and values that their organization promotes through their decision-making, then this justification will extend to the use of that authority for promoting morally worthy aims such as mitigating climate change harms and avoiding moral offense.

But still, there seems to be something to the thought that, when organizational superiors engage in managerial moral activism, they are unjustifiably shifting the ground beneath subordinates' feet. What we want to consider is how, despite the fact that there are *prima facie* good reasons to grant them wide-ranging decision-making authority, and even when they use this authority to promote morally worthy aims, it is more important for them to be constrained by the reasonable expectations that their subordinates have about the aims and values that will be embodied by their organization. (I will say more in Section 4 about the nature of these reasonable expectations.) Superiors' violation of these specific expectations seems to trigger a distinctive, forceful complaint. It is not a more general complaint about the violation of subordinates' reasonable expectations; it is not triggered whenever an organization's decisions surprise subordinates. To return to our initial, colloquial formulation of the complaint – “Who are they to impose those values on them?” – it is a more specific complaint about how, in violating subordinates' reasonable expectations about the aims and values that will shape organizational decision-making, the superiors unjustifiably impose moral norms on their subordinates. *How* they exercise their more generally justified organizational authority, in so doing, is what grounds the subordinate complaint.

¹⁷ This authority does need to be constrained sufficiently to avoid agency problems, in which superiors (as agents) use their office to benefit themselves or their favored causes at the expense of those (the principals) whose interests they are supposed to promote. Managerial moral activism does not generally pose agency problems, given that superiors are not typically the agents of subordinates and the pressure to respond to extra-organizational moral considerations often comes from principals.

3. To understand the moral force of this complaint, we first should examine the superior-subordinate relationship and how superiors' decisions purport to be authoritative for subordinates within organizations.¹⁸ For, the idea of morally activist superiors imposing values on subordinates suggests that they are somehow enforcing the moral norms associated with the extra-organizational considerations they enact through their decision-making on subordinates, and to make sense of this, we need to understand how superiors' decisions purport to carry authority for subordinates within their organizational context.

An organizational superior's decisions purport to be authoritative for those subordinate members of the organization who, according to the organization's secondary rules, are subject to the superiors' directives. These rules create a centralized decision-making structure in which, for certain matters, only certain members of the organization are entitled to make decisions, and their subordinates are to abide by these decisions. This means that, from a subordinate's perspective within an organization, they are to regard superiors' decisions as binding.¹⁹ The decisions are not to be weighed against other considerations, but rather are to be treated as providing conclusive reasons (with some exceptions, as defined by the organization's rules) that silence other considerations. This is a familiar feature of any form of putative practical authority.²⁰

There are two important clarifications to make here. First, in saying that the authority is putative, I mean that it is asserted and recognized as justified practical authority, which purports to create, and is recognized as creating, preemptive reasons for compliance (as just described), even though it may not be justified. Second, I am agnostic about what fundamentally legitimates or justifies such authority. I suggested above that, for organizational authority, concerns about limiting

¹⁸ It is a bit artificial to speak of "the superior-subordinate relationship," because it is not a unitary phenomenon. Still, there are some relatively general features of it that are our primary focus here, and so I ask you to pardon the artifice.

¹⁹ See Julian David Jonker, "The Workplace as a Cooperative Institution," in Julian David Jonker and Grant J. Rozeboom, eds., *Working as Equals: Relational Egalitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

²⁰ See, e.g., Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chapter 3.

transaction costs are a likely part of the story. We can, but need not, understand this as a story ultimately about how such transaction cost-limiting authority leads individuals to better comply with their reasons (the Razian “service conception”).²¹ Perhaps instead the story is ultimately about how such authority reflects the contours of each person’s basic “second-personal” standing to issue moral demands (the Darwallian conception).²² All that will matter, later on, is that our account of what justifies practical authority coheres with the demands of relational equality. Both the Razian and Darwallian accounts are plausible on this measure.

Even so, my conception of managerial authority may seem a bit exaggerated. Oftentimes, subordinates treat managerial directives as annoying obstacles that, largely to keep their economic and career interests intact, they begrudgingly accept. This appears to be a far cry from the stance of “accepting directives as authoritative” that I just described. But this fact – of partially alienated subordinate compliance – is entirely compatible with my general conception of organizational practical authority. This is a conception of how the secondary rules of an organization cast its centralized decision-making as authoritative for its members. As Michael Bratman has shown, such rules are typically established in large-scale organizations with a great deal of variance and attenuation in how members of the organization support those rules.²³ He distinguishes between the “kernel” of organizational members who more wholeheartedly accept the secondary rules and the wider “penumbra” of members whose compliance need not be so wholehearted and instead can be based on a wide range of reasons, including personal economic security. Those in the penumbra are still subject to the secondary rules such that, when those rules define asymmetric authority-relations, they are to regard managerial directives as authoritative.²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Darwall, “Authority and Reasons: Exclusionary and Second Personal,” in *Morality, Authority, and Law: Essays in Second-Personal Ethics I*, 151–67 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²³ Michael Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

²⁴ Ibid., 66ff.

This means that, when a superior's decisions explicitly endorse moral norms or principles – that is, when the decisions cannot be understood without appealing to certain moral norms – the superior enforces those norms on their subordinates. For instance, when WeWork's McKelvey decided that employees would not receive subsidies for meat-containing meals in order to mitigate climate change harms, his decision implicated the moral norm of eating less meat for the sake of mitigating climate harms. Organizational subordinates could not regard his decision, so understood, as authoritative without (perhaps begrudgingly) accepting that norm. For, his decision was not given simply as a directive about which meals are to receive corporate subsidies and which not; it was given as a decision about why meat-containing meals will not be subsidized. Thus, for WeWork subordinates to view McKelvey's decision as authoritative, as required by WeWork's secondary organizational rules, they need to treat the norm of avoiding climate change harms as bearing on their dietary choices at work because of his decision. Accepting his organizational authority means accepting the norm of eat-less-meat-to-lesser-climate-change because he, as an organizational superior,²⁵ issued a decision overtly applying that norm. He thus enforced this norm on his subordinates. This helps explain the familiar, but difficult to pin down, idea of superiors "imposing values" on their organizational subordinates.

Of course, for this to serve as the content of a moral complaint, it must be that superiors are not justified in enforcing moral norms in this way. What moral principle could explain why they are not? Start with the thought that, for persons to respect one another as moral equals, they should regard one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms. Here, "standing" refers to the justified scope of someone's moral norm-enforcement, and moral norm-enforcement involves the various practices by which we address demands to others to comply with moral norms

²⁵ It is a tricky matter explaining when members of organizations are deciding or acting in their capacity as organizational member, compared to when they are not, but we can safely set this issue aside here.

and hold them accountable for doing so.²⁶ Conveying a decision that implicates a moral norm in such a way as to express a demand that others comply with that norm, as organizational superiors do, is one way of exercising the standing to enforce moral norms.²⁷ And to say that someone's standing is "basic" is to acknowledge, in part, that it can be modified in familiar ways: It can be forfeited or diminished through, e.g., engaging in wrongdoing or losing one's moral capacities, or aspects of it can be released in social or institutional contexts where persons accept, as an exercise of their basic moral standing, the moral authority of others about certain matters. (More on all of this in Section 4.)

When organizational superiors' decisions enforce moral norms on their subordinates, they purport to have higher standing to enforce moral norms than their subordinates unless their subordinates' moral norm-enforcement standing is diminished or released in relation to those moral norms. For, in line with the organization's secondary rules, they expect subordinates to accept their moral norm-enforcement and do not take subordinates to be entitled to similarly enforce norms on them. This is what relating as subordinates and superiors within the centralized decision-making structure of an organization entails. Let us assume that subordinates have not diminished (or forfeited) their basic moral standing to enforce moral norms. Have they released aspects of this basic standing and thus submitted to the asymmetrical moral authority of organizational superiors? It is plausible that they have, but only with respect to moral norms tied to reasonably expected organizational aims and values, and not, I would suggest, for moral norms tied to extra-organizational values. I argue for this claim in Section 4. If true, it implies that morally activist superiors arrogate to themselves higher moral norm-enforcement standing than their subordinates.

²⁶ See Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²⁷ I here use the term "standing" instead of "authority," because I primarily use "authority" to characterize hierarchical decision-making practices within organizations, and moral standing is taken to not depend on such institutional realities. But it shares with institutional authority the very basic idea that persons have the standing to address and hold others accountable for complying with demands.

They relate as moral superiors to their subordinates. This is a complaint that invokes the ideal of relational equality, which has gained traction in recent critical analyses of workplace relations.²⁸

But before exploring that point, it is illuminating to compare my moral norm-enforcement construal of managerial moral activism to another form of suspect moral activism in the economic sphere, what Waheed Hussain labels “social change ethical consumerism” (SCEC).²⁹ Ethical consumerism, in general, involves making purchasing decisions on the basis of moral considerations that go beyond the price and quality reasons internal to marketplace decision-making. SCEC does this by aiming to bring about morally desirable social changes through the alteration of others’ economic incentives. For example, I might buy only fair-trade coffee because I think that coffee producers then will have greater incentive to shift production toward fair-trade coffee. Hussain worries that, in many cases, SCEC compromises important democratic values, most centrally by attempting to bring about social change that should only result from democratic processes without recourse to (and perhaps even undermining) those very processes. It therefore often amounts to what Hussain views as an impermissible form of ethical consumer vigilantism.

There are some important similarities between managerial moral activism and SCEC. Both concern, as Hussain puts it, the “patterns of reasoning” of participants in the economic sphere – for me, superiors deciding how to exercise authority in organizations, and for Hussain, consumers deciding what to purchase in the marketplace.³⁰ Hussain’s democratic worries about SCEC also share with my worries about managerial moral activism a commitment to relational equality. He thinks that persons “should be able to participate as equals in deciding how society will address important issues of common concern,” and oftentimes, SCEC will undermine this, “because market

²⁸ See especially Elizabeth Anderson *Private Government How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don’t Talk About It)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 130-143, and the essays in Jonker and Rozeboom, *Working as Equals*.

²⁹ Waheed Hussain, “Is Ethical Consumerism an Impermissible Form of Vigilantism?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 40 (2012): 111-43.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

actors who are better organized and control more valuable resources can apply enormous pressure on other market actors to advance a certain social agenda, but those who are poorly organized and control less valuable resources cannot apply similar pressure.”^{31 32}

Even so, there are some important differences. First, managerial moral activism is performed by superiors in their organizational roles, exercising their (we are assuming) morally acceptable asymmetrical organizational authority, whereas SCEC is performed by individual consumers who are not assigned asymmetrical authority within the marketplace (although, as Hussain points out, their varying amounts of resources grant them differing levels of market power). Second, managerial moral activism need not aim at wider social change, as SCEC does. Third, managerial moral activism promotes moral values through organizational directives, not (simply) by altering others’ economic incentives, as SCEC does.

These differences imply that managerial moral activism does not have one of the important redeeming qualities that Christian Barry and Kate MacDonald attribute to SCEC in their reply to Hussain. Barry and MacDonald rightly point out that, because SCEC can be exercised by any consumer with whatever purchasing power they can muster, it can play an important role in “rebalancing” political decision-making skewed by unjust socioeconomic inequalities.³³ This is not true of managerial moral activism, which is carried out only by those who are assigned asymmetrical authority within organizations.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 118-119.

³² This raises the question of how exactly a commitment to relational equality relates to a commitment to democracy, which I cannot address here; on this issue, see Alexander Motchoulski, “Relational Egalitarianism and Democracy,” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 18 (2021): 620-649.

³³ Christian Barry and Kate MacDonald, “Ethical Consumerism: A Defense of Market Vigilantism,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 46 (2018): 293-322, at 307.

³⁴ Relatedly, this feature of managerial moral activism implies that it is unlikely to satisfy the conditions for permissibly pursuing social change that Brian Berkey applies to ethical consumerism in “Ethical Consumerism, Democratic Values, and Justice,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 49 (2021): 237-274, at 265-6. Berkey wants to allow for non-legislative paths to social change – such as SCEC and managerial moral activism – that, among other things, are “no less representative” of the public at large than formal, democratic legislative processes. Managerial moral activism is unlikely to satisfy this condition, given that only organizational superiors can engage in it.

We now have a sharpened, but still undertheorized, understanding of the “who are they” complaint, which claims that morally activist managers, in making decisions on the basis of extra-organizational moral considerations in place of the organizational aims and values that their subordinates reasonably expect, fail to treat their subordinates as having equal basic standing to enforce moral norms and, thus, fail to treat them as moral equals. This construal of the complaint promises to better capture how it applies to a wide range of cases of managerial moral activism than the previously bracketed objections. And it suggests that an important form of organizational partiality is justified for organizational superiors, because it is centrally a complaint about how organizational superiors forsake organizational aims and values for extra-organizational ones – even when the latter really are morally important. Now let’s see if we can put some theoretical meat on these philosophically suggestive bones.

4. The moral principle at issue, again, is the claim that all persons should treat one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms. As I suggested above, it is natural to couch this moral principle within a broader one: all persons should relate to one another as moral equals. I want to elucidate this connection and, in doing so, clarify how the ideal of relational equality places constraints on the decisions of organizational superiors that precludes the apparently objectionable forms of managerial moral activism we have been stalking.³⁵

The ideal of relational equality enjoins us to avoid objectionable forms of social hierarchy, such as caste systems and feudal social orders, by establishing social relations of moral equality.³⁶

³⁵ For related discussion, see, e.g., Pierre-Yves Néron, “Rethinking the Very Idea of Egalitarian Markets and Corporations: Why Relationships Might Matter More than Distribution,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 25 (2015): 93–124 and “Egalitarianism and Executive Compensation: A Relational Argument,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 132 (2015): 171–184, and, again, Anderson, *Private Government*, and the essays in Jonker and Rozeboom, *Working as Equals*.

³⁶ See, e.g., David Miller, “Equality and Justice,” *Ratio* 10 (1997): 222–237, Anderson, *Private Government*, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, *Relational Egalitarianism: Living as Equals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), Christian Schemmel, *Justice and Egalitarian Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), and Niko Kolodny, *The Pecking Order: Social Hierarchy as a Philosophical Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023).

Some of the previously bracketed moral objections, such as the worry about paternalism, can be understood in terms of this ideal. But its application is broad and multifaceted; paternalism is but one way to fail to relate to others as moral equals.³⁷ We are interested, in particular, in why and how relational equality, as something that opposes objectionable forms of social hierarchy, requires treating one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms.

One important element of egalitarian social relations is the practice of mutual moral accountability: persons relate to one another as being subject to the same general moral demands and equally accountable to one another for abiding by those demands.³⁸ This stands in contrast with, e.g., feudal social orders in which serfs are (taken to be) morally accountable to lords but not vice versa. Egalitarian social relations require persons to regard one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms, to which all persons are equally subject.

What is it to regard someone as having such standing? As I mentioned above, the recognition of someone's moral norm-enforcement standing, in general, involves taking them to be justified in addressing certain demands to others and holding those others accountable for satisfying those demands. This is not simply a matter of believing that persons are justified in so enforcing moral norms; as Darwall argues, it involves being disposed to maintain certain reactive attitudes, such as resentment when one's own enforcement standing is flouted, indignation when others' standing is flouted, and guilt when one flouts someone else's standing.³⁹ We thus cannot regard one another as equally subject to, and accountable to one another for satisfying, the same general moral demands without being reciprocally disposed to resent, be indignant towards, and feel guilty about flouting persons' standing to address moral demands. This, then, is how relational equality involves

³⁷ See, e.g., [redacted], and Anne-Sofie Greisen Hojlund, "What Should Egalitarian Policies Express? The Case of Paternalism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 29 (2021): 519-538.

³⁸ See Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, R. Jay Wallace, *The Moral Nexus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019) and, focusing on workplaces, Sabine Tsuruda, "Working as Equal Moral Agents," *Legal Theory* 26 (2020): 305-337.

³⁹ Darwall *ibid.*, Ch. 4.

persons *regarding* one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms. It consists in the attitudes and practices by which persons take one another to be justified in addressing the same general moral demands and holding one another accountable for satisfying those demands.

This gives us a rather formal specification of just one element of relational equality, but it is enough to move toward better specifying the constraints that relational equality imposes on how superiors exercise their higher organizational authority to enforce moral norms on subordinates. Superiors must regard their higher organizational authority as constrained by how subordinates have exercised their equal basic moral norm-enforcement standing and, thus, take themselves to be accountable to subordinates for how they exercise their organizational authority – to be disposed to feel, e.g., remorse toward subordinates when the directives they issue end up flouting subordinates' equal basic standing. This suggests the following two conditions on how superiors exercise higher, organizational, norm-enforcement authority: **(1)** subordinates actually released some aspects of their equal moral norm-enforcement standing, and **(2)** in making decisions that direct subordinates, superiors accept (i) that their asymmetrical organizational authority is constrained by the limits of subordinates' release of aspects of their equal basic standing and, accordingly, (ii) that they are accountable to subordinates for how they exercise their higher organizational authority.

As before, I want to be agnostic about how exactly we should spell out what my view implies about the nature and limits of practical organizational authority. On a Razian account, we could understand our equal basic standing to enforce moral norms as encompassing a proper subset of our autonomy-based reasons to shape our own lives through choosing valuable aims and pursuits,⁴⁰ and then my claim would be that, given the particular content of these autonomy reasons, they can be justifiably excluded by the exercise of superior organizational authority only if it respects the two conditions above. Or, if we opt for a Darwallian view, we can claim that the exercise of

⁴⁰ Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, 369ff. Note I am laying out necessary conditions, and I am not claiming Raz accepts them.

superior organizational authority is directly constrained by how subordinates exercise their basic second-personal standing in agreeing to work for the organization, according to the two conditions above; this would amount to a kind of voluntarism about the scope and legitimacy of organizational practical authority. Either fits with the account I'm developing here.

Let's examine the two conditions in turn. Condition 1 requires that subordinates voluntarily released some aspects of their equal basic standing in agreeing to join an organization and submit to the direction of its superiors. That is, they agreed, in part, to accept superiors' enforcement of some moral norms without being entitled to engage in the reciprocal enforcement of those norms within the organization. Condition 1 thus overlaps with the conditions for "valid" consent.⁴¹ ⁴² Note that, typically, this agreement is open-ended in some respects and constrained in others. It is open-ended insofar as it extends over an indefinite period of time and must leave relatively open the range of specific tasks that subordinates may be directed to perform, given how an organization's aims and needs change over time.⁴³ But the agreement is constrained insofar as there is a limited range of matters over which, norms and ends for which, and means by which subordinates agree to be directed by their superior(s). They do not write a blank check of authority, opening the door for superiors to direct them by any effective means for any of the principles or purposes their superiors happen to endorse, e.g., being ordered to support the superiors' favored political candidates, or being conscripted to serve any of the superiors' favored social and environmental causes.

⁴¹ That is, consent that creates a moral permission. See, in addition to Raz, *ibid.*, Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985): 252-277, Heidi Hurd, "The Moral Magic of Consent," *Legal Theory* 2 (1996): 121-146, Larry Alexander, "The Ontology of Consent," *Analytic Philosophy* 55, no. 1 (2014): 1-12, and Tom Dougherty, "Yes Means Yes: Consent as Communication," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 43, no. 3 (2015): 224-253.

⁴² Now, given the fact that, for many individuals, working for some sort of employer is necessary for legally obtaining the means for survival, and given that their working conditions, including wages, may not vary greatly across available employers, you might doubt that subordinates fully or "validly" release their equal basic standing in agreeing to work for an employer. Their agreement does not involve an actual release, but rather cooption, of some aspects of their equal basic standing. But, following Jonker, "Workplace as a Cooperative Institution," I think that economic necessity need not vitiate a subordinate's agreement to submit to an organization's superiors' norm-enforcement authority, provided that see how their avowed interests are adequately served by their choice.

⁴³ This is part of the economic purpose of creating an employment relationship, instead of a more limited, "gig" subcontractor relationship. For the *locus classicus* of this idea, see again Coase, "Nature of the Firm."

Condition 2 on the exercise of superiors' organizational authority concerns how a superior should regard their authority in exercising it. It first requires that they view their organizational authority as legitimately making demands of their subordinates only insofar as its exercise stays within the boundaries implied by the subordinates' limited release of aspects of their basic moral norm-enforcement standing, as described by Condition 1. Subordinates carve out some defined moral territory within which they agree to submit to superiors' asymmetrical norm-enforcement. And this means, in turn, that the superior must exercise their authority at least partly on the basis of what their subordinates reasonably expect to be their organization's aims and values.

Drawing this implication requires a bit of explanation. In speaking of a limited range of "organizational" aims and values, I have in mind aims and values that the organization is disposed to avow and that reliably guide its internal functioning, including its decision-making procedures.⁴⁴ And in speaking of what subordinates "reasonably expect" to be organizational aims and values, I have in mind the set of beliefs and background assumptions that, given their available evidence, they should maintain⁴⁵ about the aims and values that the organization will tend to avow and that will reliably guide its functioning. There may be a gap between the aims and values that the organization actually avows and implements and those that subordinates reasonably think the organization will avow and implement. The latter is what matters for setting the boundaries implied by their release of aspects of their norm-enforcement standing, because, as an exercise of their agency, it can only derive from the evidence available to them. They cannot release aspects of their norm-enforcement standing for organizational aims and values beyond their epistemic ken. My claim is that an organizational superior must always exercise their organizational norm-enforcement authority over

⁴⁴ For accounts of the role of decision-making procedures in constituting corporate aims, see Peter French, *Collective and Corporate Responsibility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) and Michael Bratman, *Shared and Institutional Agency: Toward a Planning Theory of Human Practical Organization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁴⁵ Why "should maintain"? An employee may have unreasonable beliefs about the organization's aims and values, and these beliefs would not plausibly constrain the legitimate exercise of managers' organizational authority.

subordinates at least partly on the basis of the aims and values that subordinates reasonably expect to be the organization's aims and values – with an important caveat I explain below, in Section 5 – precisely because those are the aims and values that properly inform the subordinates' release of aspects of their equal basic norm-enforcement standing.

Condition 2 also requires that organizational superiors take themselves to be accountable to their subordinates for how they use their higher organizational norm-enforcement authority. This entails that superiors accept their subordinates' standing to blame and resent them for abuses of their organizational authority, taking seriously subordinate criticism and censure of how they exercise this authority and being prone to feel guilty if this blame is warranted.⁴⁶ It also implies, importantly, that superiors are disposed to justify their decisions to subordinates in terms of the boundaries implied by subordinates' release of aspects of their basic standing, including whether superiors have hewed to reasonably expected organizational aims and values.⁴⁷ This is a part of what follows from superiors accepting that they are accountable, and thus answerable, to their subordinates for how they exercise their asymmetrical norm-enforcement authority.

This means that cases of managerial moral activism, as I have described them, violate the requirements of relational equality, specifically, the requirements stemming from the practice of reciprocal moral accountability.⁴⁸ For, in these cases, organizational superiors base their decisions on extra-organizational considerations and ignore pertinent organizational values. In doing so, they

⁴⁶ On the connection between exercising authority, relational equality, and accepting accountability, see Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*, ch. 4, Anderson, *Private Government*, 15ff, and Lippert-Rasmussen, *Relational Egalitarianism*, 94–97.

⁴⁷ Note that these are requirements only about how a superior regards and uses their managerial authority. The relational egalitarian importance of superior accountability to subordinates may also require structural or policy-level constraints, such as, for instance, a policy granting employees codetermination rights within firms, as legally required by the *Mitbestimmung* regime in Germany. For some discussion of this, see Iñigo González-Ricoy, "Little Republics: Authority and the Political Nature of the Firm," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 50 (2021): 90-120, and Roberto Frega, Lisa Herzog, and Christian Neuhäuser, "Workplace Democracy – The Recent Debate," *Philosophy Compass* 14 (2019).

⁴⁸ What about if superiors try to pursue extra-organizational values through less directive means, such as nudges? Does this still count as an objectionable enforcement of moral norms? It would if the nudge is transparent enough to be properly understood by its targets as an exercise of managerial authority. And if it is not so transparent, then it will be objectionable (by relational egalitarian lights) for other reasons, as argued by Grant J. Rozeboom, "How to Evaluate Managerial Nudges," *Journal of Business Ethics* 182 (2023): 1073-86, at 1081-83.

enforce moral norms beyond those that fall within the purview of subordinates' release of basic norm-enforcement standing (assuming that such a release has occurred) and thus cannot justify their decisions in terms of the boundaries set by this release.⁴⁹

Now, you might notice that a superior's giving weight to extra-organizational moral values does not generally entail ignoring organizational aims and values. So when and why does a superior's commitment to extra-organizational considerations carry this additional implication? Two general conditions come to mind: (i) The organizational superior takes the extra-organizational moral considerations to have the kind of "preemptive" significance that requires giving no weight to organizational aims and values, as I discuss further in Section 6. Or (ii) it is simply psychologically difficult for the superior to care deeply about the extra-organizational considerations, as they do, and also pay any heed to organizational aims and values. For instance, the superior may have a "fanatical" commitment to the extra-organizational considerations, which entails treating them as "sacred" values that swamp competing considerations.^{50 51} It is difficult, accordingly, for them to take seriously pertinent organizational aims and values and the importance of justifying their decisions in the terms set by subordinates' release of norm-enforcement standing.

⁴⁹ An immediate worry is that this account proscribes what are in fact morally innocuous forms of managerial do-gooding. Suppose that your college's dean institutes a policy of rewarding faculty and staff whose offices lower energy usage below a given threshold, with an eye to lowering the institution's carbon footprint and helping mitigate climate change harms. Suppose also that your institution has no known commitment to combating climate change. Is it really wrongful for the dean to act in this way? It is important to first note that many organizations will have some aim or value that supports this sort of managerial behavior, related to the efficient use of organizational resources. It is unusual for an organization to have no known concern for reducing waste. (The same will be true, *mutatis mutandis*, for many other kinds of innocuous-seeming decisions and the common, broad values found in most organizations, such as inclusivity. Below I address the issue of how broad and ambiguous these values often are.) This means that what matters, on my view, is what forms the basis for a superior's decision to conserve energy, and whether it includes the already-existing organizational aims that support their decision or not. If not, then what my view objects to is *how* they exercise their authority – namely, in a manner that imposes an extra-organizational moral norm on their subordinates – but not the narrow content of their decision, simply understood as a decision to better conserve the organization's resources.

⁵⁰ As discussed by Paul Katsafanas, "Fanaticism and Sacred Values," *Philosophers' Imprint* 19 (2019): 1-20.

⁵¹ Notice also that cases of managerial moral activism do not only concern when a superior makes a decision that conflicts with what their organization's aims and values support. The organizational aims and values may point in the same direction as the extra-organizational considerations to which the superior is committed. Still, if their decision-making gives weight to the latter at the expense of the former, they violate the requirements of relational equality.

To illustrate, focus on the WeWork example. I should note that, without detailed insight into McKelvey's thinking, it is not entirely clear whether he engaged in the proscribed form of moral activism, because this ultimately concerns his internal patterns of decision-making. But it is plausible to understand his decision-making as giving predominant weight to the moral value of avoiding climate change-related harms and, in doing so, giving negligible weight to pertinent organizational aims and values. Somehow his concern with climate change swamped any concern he had for WeWork's (reasonably expected) aims and values. For instance, one of WeWork's five stated organizational values is "Be Human, Be Kind: Collaboration, kindness, and authenticity are essential to our humanity. We must cherish each other and build a community that celebrates each person's unique talents, passions, and backgrounds."⁵² (Let us assume that WeWork's stated values served as its reasonably expected organizational values.) McKelvey seemed to give very little weight to this value, if any, even though it was clearly relevant to his decision-making. If he had, he would have pursued the value of reducing climate change-related harms differently, with a concern for "collaboration" with his employees, especially those whose "unique ... backgrounds" involved a practice of eating meat. Now, again, without more detailed insight into McKelvey's decision-making, including his conversations and correspondence with other WeWork leaders, this is speculative. But it provides one plausible construal of his decision-making, on which his commitment to extra-organizational moral considerations led him to ignore pertinent organizational aims and values and to not act accountable and answerable, in the relevant ways, to WeWork employees.⁵³

We now have a more fulsome account of why managerial moral activism is morally objectionable, in the "who are they" sense of our initial complaint. It undermines the practice of

⁵² See the list of values at <https://www.wework.com/mission>. Note also that none of WeWork's other four values directly concern the environment or climate change. Although, in its official statement of "social impact" (<https://www.wework.com/info/impact>), WeWork now does include a statement about "improving the planet." I am not sure when this environmental statement became an official part of the company's publicly known identity.

⁵³ An alternative construal would raise the issue of managerial judicial activism I address immediately below, in section 5.

mutual moral accountability, which is an important element of relational equality. This practice requires persons to regard one another as having the same basic standing to enforce moral norms, and in local contexts of asymmetrical authority, such as within organizations, it requires superiors to respect the limited way that subordinates have released some aspects of this basic standing. This requires, in turn, that superiors base their decisions on reasonably expected organizational aims and values, and to take themselves to be accountable and answerable to subordinates for how they exercise their asymmetrical organizational authority, given the limits on subordinates' release of aspects of their basic moral standing. Managerial moral activism violates these requirements.

5. There are two complications for this claim, which concern the content of an organization's aims and values. The first complication arises from the fact that, in many cases, an organization's reasonably expected aims and values have conflicting implications, and/or what they imply is unclear. For instance, many businesses espouse concerns for the environment, employee wellbeing, and shareholder value. Oftentimes one of these values will conflict with the others, such that one or more of them must be compromised (although perhaps this occurs less often than is commonly supposed⁵⁴). Or sometimes organizations state their values in such broad, sweeping terms that it is unclear what does (or doesn't) follow from them, e.g., Google's former slogan, "Don't be evil," or WeWork's initial mission of "raising the world's consciousness."

In these cases, there may be organizational rules (among the Hartian secondary rules) for how to resolve conflicts and unclarity. But, more to the point here, organizational superiors often will need to play an active role in exercising judgment about how to resolve conflicts between, and bring specificity to, organizational aims and values. We can think of this as a kind of judicial role

⁵⁴ For discussion of some evidence for this suggestion, as applied to for-profit firms, see Alex Edmans, *Grow the Pie: How Great Companies Deliver Both Purpose and Profit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

within organizations, operating in tandem with the “legislative” role of creating and revising organizational aims and values. There may be reasons for an organization to separate the judicial role (of clarifying and interpreting organizational aims and values) from the legislative role, for balance-of-power reasons familiar from political theory. These reasons for separating judicial and legislative powers do not directly concern relational equality and the practice of reciprocal moral accountability. But they do highlight what may be an additional, worrisome form of managerial moral activism: a superior chooses to interpret their organization’s aims and values without regard for precedent (i.e., how the aims and values standardly have been understood by the organization’s members), and with special concern for their own interests and moral outlook. This is different from the issue at hand here, of superiors making decisions on the basis of extra-organizational considerations. But this managerial judicial activism may run afoul of a similar relational egalitarian constraint, insofar as it subverts reasonable employee expectations about how organizational norm-enforcement authority will be exercised over them. And it may arise in similar examples; for instance, in some of the cases in which employees have been terminated for their offensive social media posts, superiors cited vague anti-obscenity and workplace propriety policies, interpreting them in ways that seemed to reflect a narrow, prejudicial, or otherwise idiosyncratic normative outlook.

A second complication is due to the fact that organizations sometimes have morally repugnant aims and values. For instance, prior to 2012, the family-owned restaurant chain Chick-fil-A had a charitable arm, WinShape Foundation, that gave significant amounts of money to anti-LGBTQ non-profit organizations, including Exodus International.⁵⁵ These donations plausibly reflected the values of Chick-fil-A as a corporation, which linked the donations to the company’s heritage and long history of supporting “traditional heterosexual marriages.”⁵⁶ It seems mistaken to

⁵⁵ See Jim Edwards, “Here’s How Much Money Chick-fil-A Gives to Anti-Gay Groups,” *Business Insider* (July 5, 2012).

⁵⁶ See Cameron McWhirter, “Chick-fil-A’s Long Christian Heritage,” *Wall Street Journal* (July 27, 2012).

claim that relational equality requires superiors to hew to such values in their decision-making. This brings us to an important caveat to my view, which is that an organization's aims and values must be compatible with the wider existence of relational equality. Relational equality is a fundamentally social ideal: Its instantiation consists in the structure and "ethos" of our multifarious social relations, including the content of the social norms that govern our everyday interactions.⁵⁷ This suggests that, insofar as a collective agent has some influence over the relevant social structures and/or norms, and this influence is not merely the aggregate of the individual bits of influence held by its constituent members, it is required to exercise its social influence in ways that are compatible with achieving (or better establishing⁵⁸) relational equality.

Thus, while organizations are not persons, in the sense of those amongst whom relational equality is to be achieved,⁵⁹ they typically are among the collective agents that shape our social structure and ethos. Accordingly, they are subject to requirements to not obstruct the realization of relational equality, including through their aims and values. In particular, my claim is that, relative to an organization's known sphere of social influence, its having a given set of aims and values must not impede or weaken, overall, the social structures and norms that constitute relational equality.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See, e.g., the account of relational egalitarianism developed by Jonathan Wolff, "Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 27 (1998): 97-122, and "Fairness, Respect, and the Egalitarian Ethos Revisited," *Journal of Ethics* 14 (2010): 335-350, as well as G. A. Cohen's influential notion of an egalitarian ethos in *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). And on social norms in particular, see Han van Wietmarschen, "What Is Social Hierarchy?" *Noûs* 56 (2022): 920-939, and [redacted].

⁵⁸ This parenthetical qualification acknowledges the thorny debate about how relational egalitarianism should account for non-ideal conditions; see, e.g., Jonathan Wolff, "Equality and Hierarchy," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (2018), at 18-19, who thinks we should focus only on the "real world" problems that social hierarchy creates for those at the bottom and then, looking to examples of how hierarchy has been attenuated without counterbalancing ill effects, theorize about how to attenuate these hierarchies. I think Wolff is misled by an overly broad view of the forms of social hierarchy that relational egalitarians should oppose, and thus is unduly pessimistic about targeting our theorizing at moving closer to dismantling such hierarchies and achieving relational equality.

⁵⁹ For a defense of this claim, see Niko Kolodny, "Being Under the Power of Others," in *Republicanism and the Future of Democracy*, ed. Yiftah Elezar and Geneviève Rousselière (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁶⁰ This caveat about organizational aims and values is important for addressing a further difficulty that Barry and MacDonald, "Ethical Consumerism," raise for Hussain's critique of vigilante ethical consumerism. Barry and MacDonald worry that Hussain's view hamstring consumers from being able to push back against mistaken democratic decisions. Similarly, you might worry that my account hamstring superiors from being able to push back against mistaken organizational aims and values. The caveat here helps alleviate this worry.

Let me explain this caveat in more detail, while also conceding that, without a full account of the social structures and norms that constitute relational equality, my explanation will be incomplete. What is most important to stress is that it focuses on the overall effect of organizations' aims and values on persons' adherence to, and acceptance of, the social structures and norms of relational equality. In many cases, an organization's aims and values will have both strengthening and attenuating effects. Consider, for instance, Carolyn Chen's study of the religious fervor with which many Silicon Valley employees are taught to approach their work, under the influence of organizational values about the meaning, purpose, and impact of their work.⁶¹ On the one hand, these companies' values set the expectation that all persons are entitled to find meaning and dignity in their work, plausibly strengthening persons' acceptance of some aspects of the social norms of relational equality. If I am encouraged to see you as equally deserving of engaging in meaningful work, this plausibly supports my regarding you as my moral equal. On the other hand, by focusing persons' energies so heavily on work and its productive aims, these organizational values attenuate persons' connections to civic and political institutions and activities,⁶² plausibly weakening their adherence to other important aspects of the structures and norms of relational equality, such as that all persons be well-positioned to exercise political influence in their communities.⁶³ What the above caveat requires is that, relative to a baseline where a given organization does not exist,⁶⁴ these

⁶¹ Carolyn Chen, *Work Pray Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 196-212.

⁶³ As described in Kolodny, "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42 (2014): 287-336, and specified as "equal influence" in *The Pecking Order*, at 137ff.

⁶⁴ This is the appropriate baseline, because these are voluntary associations of persons, any one of which can be dissolved, I assume, without undermining a given society in which the social norms of relational equality are realized. Now, you might worry that this baseline implies that organizations whose central functioning helps support relational equality – e.g., the printing of anti-racist literature, or the production of accessibility equipment – would have wider latitude to adopt aims that erode the social norms of relational equality. This may seem like an odd result. But it seems odd only if we abstract away from three facts: first, what an organization produces (if it is a productive organization) is just one of its central features that may support relational equality and, in doing so, buy it some wiggle room in how closely it hews to the social structure and norms of relational equality. Its aims and values – and, related to this, its internal culture and how it shapes the dispositions of its members – are just as central to its identity. If it has aims and values that are strongly supportive of the social structure and norms of relational equality, this may relax the extent to

strengthening and attenuating effects do not, when taken together, have an overall effect of weakening or impeding the social structures and norms of relational equality.⁶⁵

Another important feature of the caveat is that its standard is set relative to an organization's known (or what should be known⁶⁶) scope of social influence. This is for two reasons. First, it delimits the social effects that are pertinent for constraining the content of an organization's aims and values to those that fall within the ken of those charged with shaping its aims and values. This is a standard that is meant, in part, to provide guidance to such persons, and so it should not be sensitive to information they cannot feasibly obtain. Second, it covers all persons whose adherence or attachment to the social structures and norms of relational equality are (or should be) known to be impacted by the organization's aims and values, regardless of whether those persons fall into the more traditional categories of organizational moral responsibility, such as being a member of the organization or being one of its "stakeholders." Third parties matter when considering an organization's effects on social structures and norms.⁶⁷

With the caveat in mind, turn back to the issue of what relational equality requires of superiors in deciding how to exercise asymmetrical, organizational norm-enforcement authority over their subordinates. My main claim was that, to treat their subordinates as moral equals (qua having

which the products or services it sells must also have an egalitarian social impact. This is a plausible result. Second, the amount of wiggle room that an organization has is a function, in part, of its social influence. Functioning in ways that help to establish relational equality does not, by itself, grant an organization latitude for holding inegalitarian aims and values. For, perhaps it wields the sort of wide social influence that gives it little discretion to adopt aims and values that depart from the dictates of relational equality. Third, if an organization's central functioning really does support relational equality, then this will place constraints on how far its guiding aims and values can undermine relational equality. For instance, if an organization produces equipment to assist individuals with disabilities, but they maintain jingoistic values and so refuse to sell their equipment to individuals of other nationalities, then their central functioning does not actually support the social structure and norms of relational equality after all.

⁶⁵ Contexts in which the social norms of relational equality are largely absent do not allow for weakening, which is why I include the term "impeding" in how I formulate the caveat.

⁶⁶ This parenthetical qualification is needed to avoid allowing an organization's aims and values to be shielded from social effects that the organization (and those within it) culpably ignores.

⁶⁷ See van Wietmarschen, "Social Hierarchy," at 4, and Schemmel, *Egalitarian Relations*, at 168-70. This is not to ignore the importance of formalized, e.g., legal, norms, for opposing social inequality, as shown in John Hasnas, "Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and the Anti-Discrimination Principle," *Fordham Law Review* 71(2002): 423-542, and Sophia Moreau, *Faces of Inequality: A Theory of Wrongful Discrimination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

equal basic moral norm-enforcement standing), superiors must always make decisions at least partly on the basis of reasonably expected organizational aims and values. Now we are in a better position to understand an important qualification to this claim: The reasonably expected organizational aims and values must not be those that tend to weaken the social structures and norms of relational equality within the organization's known sphere of social influence. That is, the balance of the strengthening and attenuating effects of the organization's having these aims and values on persons' acceptance of and adherence to the structures and norms of relational equality within its (what should be) known sphere of social influence must not dip below the baseline set by the organization's non-existence. So my view does not bind superiors to all organizational aims and values, however flagrantly inegalitarian they may be, as seen in the anti-LGBTQ stance previously exhibited by Chick-fil-A.⁶⁸ But when an organization's aims and values do not weaken the social structures and norms of relational equality and a superior fails to make decisions on the basis of them, the superior disregards their subordinates' equal norm-enforcement standing and thus fails to relate to them as moral equals. The superior violates the demands of relational equality.

6. Even when qualified in this way, a challenge to my view arises from the common thought that relational equality requires impartiality, specifically, the impartiality of not arbitrarily favoring a particular person's or group's interests in one's decision-making.⁶⁹ Doesn't requiring superiors to

⁶⁸ You might worry that my view is unduly restrictive on the kind of aims and values that organizations are allowed to maintain. What about church organizations that maintain overtly patriarchal norms, or political groups that maintain overtly jingoistic norms? Do I deny that such groups are allowed to exist and maintain the hierarchical internal structures integral to their functioning? I do not, at least not in general; I think that relational equality allows for a reasonable pluralism of organizations (understood in terms of their aims and values). What matters, again, is whether, according to the social influence that an organization wields, the overall effects it has on the wider social structures and norms of relational equality are supportive or corrosive. This may allow for, e.g., a church that has patriarchal internal norms but that, in many other ways, cultivates dispositions in its adherents that support the social structures and norms of relational equality and also has (perhaps deliberately) limited wider social influence (such that its patriarchal norms do not undermine or obstruct the wider social structure and norms of relational equality).

⁶⁹ Niko Kolodny describes this as "Impersonal Justification," and he takes it to be a "tempering factor" that can help justify asymmetries of authority between persons, including in workplace hierarchies. See Kolodny, *Pecking Order*, ch. 8, and "An Objection to Workplace Hierarchy Itself?" in Jonker and Rozeboom, *Working as Equals*.

base their decisions on organizational aims and values, even assuming that these satisfy the above caveat, run counter to such impartiality, by requiring them to favor the personal or group interests that happen to be reflected in those aims and values?

Not generally, because relational equality's demand for impartiality is issued relative to those who are properly concerned with one's decision-making. If all of those persons are connected to one's organization, then organizational aims and values (subject to the above caveat) can provide a suitably impartial basis for one's decision-making.⁷⁰ But what about when some of the impacted individuals are not connected to one's organization? For instance, victims of current and future climate change-related harms would seem to be impacted by the decisions that large companies, such as WeWork, are making about their CO2 emissions policies, regardless of whether those victims ever work for, invest in, or are otherwise connected to WeWork. But it is not clear to me that the claim to impartial consideration that such individuals have on WeWork leaders to reduce WeWork's CO2 emissions is a claim of relational equality. (One reason to think not is that non-human animals harmed by climate change have a similar entitlement to impartial consideration.⁷¹) Relational equality does not encompass all moral claims that persons can make of one another and, accordingly, it is conceivable that the constraints imposed by relational equality sometimes will conflict with morality's other demands.⁷² Such a conflict may arise for superiors deciding whether to defer to their organization's aims and values or instead unilaterally promote an impartially justified, but extra-organizational, social or environmental cause. (Note also that my view allows for superiors to revise organizational aims and values, perhaps in response to impartially justified moral claims; I return to this in Section 7.) So I do not see any convincing argument for thinking that superiors who

⁷⁰ This is what Kolodny calls "locally impersonal" reasons in "An Objection to Workplace Hierarchy Itself?"

⁷¹ See Jeff Sebo, *Saving Animals, Saving Ourselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), at 50-52.

⁷² This falls under the broad heading of "dualist" views about the partiality of "associative" duties as described and defended by David Brink, "Impartiality and Associative Duties," *Utilitas* 13 (2001): 152-172.

how to their organization's reasonably expected aims and values (subject to the above caveat) in their decision-making violate the limited kind of impartiality that relational equality requires.

A closely related concern stems from the plausible thought that any form of practical authority, including managerial authority, is justified simply in virtue of being justifiable to those over whom it is wielded.⁷³ If superiors are making decisions on the basis of moral reasons shared with subordinates (such as reasons to mitigate climate change harms), then isn't this enough for their authority to be justifiable to, and thus legitimate for, those subordinates? My reply is that some of the relevant reasons that subordinates have – that are pertinent to the justification of how superiors exercise their managerial authority – extend beyond their reasons to pursue the cited moral values (of, e.g., mitigating climate change harms) and also include reasons of relational equality, which we can understand, at least in part, as reasons to not be subject to objectionably hierarchical social structures and associated forms of inequalitarian treatment. These reasons require more of how superiors exercise their organizational authority than simply drawing upon some of the moral aims they share with their subordinates.

Relational equality requires an important form of organizational partiality of superiors, then: a commitment to decide on the basis of, and thus give substantial weight to, organizational aims and values in their norm-enforcing decision-making, even when these aims and values carry less moral weight than extra-organizational moral considerations, viewed impartially. But it is not yet clear what the normative contours of this organizational partiality are. How exactly is it that, in requiring superiors to be partial to their organization's aims and values, relational equality alters how they should weigh these aims and values against extra-organizational moral considerations?

⁷³ For instance, on Raz's service conception of authority, it needs to be grounded in the reasons that subordinates have independently of being subject to the authority. Or on Jonker's, "Workplace as a Cooperative Institution," contractualist account of workplace authority, it needs to be grounded in reasons that all workplace members can reasonably accept, in light of the cooperative endeavor for which they are employed.

Does relational equality increase their weight, such that, e.g., the value “Be Human, Be Kind” has greater weight for McKelvey than it does, *caeteris paribus*, for the rest of us?⁷⁴ This seems inapt. Kindness is not more important for McKelvey than it is for the rest of us. And, at any rate, it will not suffice for grounding superiors’ avoidance of managerial moral activism. Extra-organizational moral considerations may still have so much comparative moral weight that, even if superiors appreciate how their organization’s aims and values have (putatively) increased weight because of what relational equality requires of them, the extra-organizational considerations still will swamp their decision-making. Or the organizational aims and values may be incomparable to the extra-organizational considerations, and plausible approaches to choosing amongst incomparable options, such as voluntarism, will allow for superiors to ignore their organizations’ aims and values.⁷⁵ Or the extra-organizational moral considerations may undercut the increased weight of the organizational aims and values, still allowing for managerial moral activism.

A more promising approach begins with the observation that, when we participate in institutions of any kind, it is common for us to be disposed to both give weight (but not necessarily increased weight) to organization-relevant considerations and, at the same time, ignore extra-organizational considerations that would otherwise shape our reasoning.⁷⁶ This makes possible, but is not limited to, the authority relations that organizations involve. For instance, in calling a ball or a strike, an umpire is only to consider the relative position of the pitch to the batter and plate, not the fact that calling a strike will cause the pitcher mental distress. To model this, we can look again to Raz’s idea of a preemptive reason (we considered this earlier when characterizing authority), which is a reason both to do some action *A* and not to act on certain other reasons relevant to *A*-ing – to

⁷⁴ This is what Errol Lord, “Justifying Partiality,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19 (2016): 569-590, argues is true of justified partiality in personal relationships and projects, and his account could be extended to group partiality.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Ruth Chang, “Voluntarist Reasons and the Sources of Normativity,” in *Reasons for Actions*, eds., David Sobel and Steven Wall, 243-71 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 256).

⁷⁶ For an influential statement of this idea, see John Rawls, “Two Concepts of Rules,” *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 3-32.

exclude them from one's reasoning about whether to A .⁷⁷ A related, broader idea in the philosophy of action is Michael Bratman's notion of "policies about weights." These are practical commitments to give a certain amount (or zero) weight to certain considerations in one's reasoning.⁷⁸ These policies include what we can call "preemptive policies" – commitments to both give weight to certain considerations about A -ing and give no weight to other A -relevant reasons.

We can use these ideas to better understand the implications of the relational egalitarian requirement that superiors be partial toward their organization's aims and values. Superiors need not give greater weight to organizational aims and values. Rather, they need only give (non-inflated) weight to organizational aims and values and give less or no weight to extra-organizational values.⁷⁹ Strictly speaking, they need to give as little weight to the extra-organizational values as is compatible with not ignoring organizational aims and values, so that the latter can form an independently sufficient basis for their decisions.⁸⁰ This could be because they appreciate how relational equality generates a Razian preemptive reason in favor of organizational values. Or it could be because they appreciate how relational equality generates a reason to form a preemptive policy in favor of organizational values. (The second suggestion is more normatively modest than the first, insofar as one's reasons for forming a preemptive policy need not themselves be preemptive reasons.⁸¹) Either way, we have a more plausible picture of the normative contours of the relational egalitarian requirement for superiors to be partial to their organization's aims and values.

⁷⁷ Raz, *Morality of Freedom*, Ch. 3.

⁷⁸ This idea is developed across several papers, but most fully in Michael E. Bratman, "Valuing and the Will," in *Structures of Agency: Essays*, 47-67 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷⁹ This is similar to how Troy Jollimore, *Love's Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), Ch. 2, understands the "blinding" aspect of love's partiality.

⁸⁰ In many of the cases that I have been discussing, such as when extra-organizational values are taken to have preemptive significance, or are incomparably related to organizational aims and values, this will require giving the extra-organizational values no weight. This, in effect, will require treating organizational aims and values as having exclusionary force. But in many other cases, it will be sufficient to treat the extra-organizational values as merely having equal or lesser weight than organizational ones.

⁸¹ See [redacted].

We can usefully contrast my view with Samuel Scheffler's account of group partiality. Scheffler argues that we justifiably, non-instrumentally value our membership in certain groups (including organizations) and that, in so valuing our group-membership, we take ourselves to have reasons to support these groups and their aims.⁸² He then claims that, given our nature as social, valuing creatures, morality makes room for some of these reasons (that arise from valuing group-membership). Some of them serve as moral reasons.⁸³ I say "some," because Scheffler concedes that "some groups are evil or corrupt, and if we value our membership in such a group we may see ourselves as having reasons that we do not really have."⁸⁴ This is similar to my worry, above, about organizations having morally repugnant aims and values.

At a high level, Scheffler and I agree that superiors, as members of groups, often justifiably take themselves to have reasons to support their organization's aims and values, in ways that constitute a kind of organizational partiality. But beyond this high level of agreement, there are important differences. First, Scheffler takes the reasons for organizational partiality to derive from our justifiable valuation of group membership, whereas I take them to derive from the demands of relational equality. Second, and relatedly, the perspective (or attitude) from which the reasons of organizational partiality are intelligible on Scheffler's view is the perspective of someone non-instrumentally valuing their membership in an organization, while on my view it is simply the perspective of someone regarding others as moral equals. These perspectives (or attitudes) need not be in tension, but neither entails the other, at least not generally. Third, Scheffler takes the reasons of partiality to apply to any member of an organization, whereas my view takes them to impose a special burden on superiors, i.e., those who have higher organizational authority. Fourth, and finally, the way that Scheffler describes our reasons of group partiality suggests that they merely magnify the

⁸² Scheffler, "Reasonable Partiality," 106-108.

⁸³ Ibid., 128-129.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 108.

weight the group aims and values should have in our reasoning, rather than, as my view suggests, preempting considerations that are exogenous to the group (although perhaps Scheffler could take my preemptive approach on board).

Some of these differences may lead you to question the extent to which my view supports a genuine form of organizational partiality. If one can appreciate my view's reasons for organizational partiality from a perspective that need not (non-instrumentally) value organizational membership, and if this perspective – of regarding others as moral equals – extends just as aptly to strangers as it does to organizational co-members, are these really reasons of partiality? It depends on what you want from an account of justified organizational partiality.⁸⁵ What I have argued is that relational equality requires superiors to not forsake organizational aims and values for extra-organizational moral concerns.⁸⁶ This requirement arises from superiors' asymmetric organizational authority, and it directs their reasoning away from an impartial moral assessment of which moral considerations are most weighty independently of how these considerations overlap with organizational aims and values. I think this suffices for a substantial form of organizational partiality, albeit one that is not grounded in any deep allegiance to organizations. (It could be punk partiality, so to speak.)

Even so, following Niko Kolodny, you might distinguish between reductive and non-reductive explanations of the reasons of partiality and allege that my account provides a merely reductive explanation of organizational partiality – one that justifies partiality by appealing to a non-partial moral principle.⁸⁷ I agree, insofar as my account starts from a moral principle – that persons

⁸⁵ Niko Kolodny, "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38 (2010): 37-75, at 42, might worry that reasons of relational equality cannot be acted upon people "in being partial" – that "it would be oddly estranged" for them to do so. But insofar as we see the demand of relational equality to avoid managerial moral activism as an essential element of how superiors ought to relate to their employees, then a superior acting on the basis of this demand is in no way estranged from their employees, qua organizational superior, even though, as I acknowledge below, their doing so does not entail deep loyalty or allegiance to their organization.

⁸⁶ Similarly, Daniel Viehoff, "Democratic Equality and Political Authority" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42 (2014): 337-375, argues that relational equality requires citizens to treat democratically determined decisions as preempting a range of reasons for disobeying those decisions. But, again, I here leave open how relational equality relates to democracy.

⁸⁷ Kolodny, "Parents and Children," at 39-42.

ought to relate as moral equals – that makes no mention of partiality. But it is not worrisomely reductive, because as I understand relational equality (in terms of social norms and ethos), we can never determine how individuals ought to relate as equals without appealing to how, within a given social context in which they are to realize the norms and ethos of relational equality, they are bound up in certain associations and relationships. These associations shape much of the content of, and are not merely conduits for, relational equality's demands.

7. What, then, is a superior to do when they encounter weighty, extra-organizational moral considerations? My view does not require superiors always to ignore them. Extra-organizational considerations may point in the same direction as superiors' organizational aims and values. If so, as long as superiors gives substantial weight to organizational aims and values, then my view does not preclude superiors also giving some weight to the extra-organizational considerations, as additional supporting reasons. I have argued only that superiors giving weight to extra-organizational reasons cannot swamp or displace organizational values as the basis for their decisions.

But harder cases arise when extra-organizational considerations disagree with superiors' organizational aims and values. Given that moral considerations often have preemptive force, superiors could not give weight to the extra-organizational considerations in many cases without ignoring their organization's aims and values. For if the extra-organizational considerations have preemptive force, giving them weight entails giving no or negligible weight to coinciding and/or competing considerations, including those generated by organizational aims and values. Relational equality then requires superiors to turn the tables on the extra-organizational considerations and treat their organization's aims and values as having preemptive force, giving no weight to the extra-organizational considerations (as described above).

Now, for all I have said here, this may not be what superiors morally ought to do, all things considered. Perhaps morality sometimes requires superiors to violate the requirements of relational equality. But superiors could accommodate both the relational egalitarian requirement to be partial to their organization's (reasonably expected) aims and values and the moral importance of extra-organizational considerations by waiting to make a decision until they ensure that the extra-organizational considerations are incorporated into their organization's values.

For example, perhaps McKelvey did not need to decide right away whether to implement policies discouraging employee meat-consumption. Instead, he could have initiated a transparent process to incorporate a climate change-related value into WeWork's set of organizational values. Such a process need not be democratic, allowing subordinates to help decide the matter (although relational equality may support doing so). It would simply need to be transparent, in two ways: (i) WeWork subordinates can adjust their reasonable expectations to account for the revision to WeWork's values, i.e., they can decide whether they are willing to follow directives based on the revised values, or instead protest or quit, and (ii) WeWork subordinates are enabled to hold their managers accountable for exercising managerial authority on the basis of the revised values. (Recall from Section 4 that superiors need to accept that they are accountable to their subordinates for how they enforce moral norms.) This would mean, among other things, that McKelvey would be open to employee criticism of, e.g., WeWork executives' frequent use of corporate jet transportation as out of line with an organizational value of mitigating climate change harms.

If superiors can change an organization's values, what difference does it make to subordinates whether superiors simply decide on the basis of (what are now) extra-organizational moral considerations or, instead, first integrate these into the organization's values and then makes the same decision? It is the difference between subordinates being respected as moral equals, who have released aspects of their basic norm-enforcement standing to organizational superiors with

reasonable expectations about the aims and values for which organizational authority will be exercised over them, and not being so respected. Superiors' step of transparently changing the organization's aims and values, and holding back from deciding on the basis of what are now extra-organizational considerations until then, makes this difference.

Note also that changing an organization's aims and values is much more demanding than simply making a decision on the basis of what are now extra-organizational considerations. As I stated earlier, an organization's aims and values must characterize its internal functioning and decision-making procedures, as well as its internal culture (which, incidentally, raises further issues about respecting employees as equals⁸⁸). Changing an organization's decision-making procedures and culture to align with a new value – communicating the new value to the relevant decision-makers, ensuring they understand its implications, sorting through conflicts with preexisting policies, instituting monitoring and accountability for implementing the new value, creating reliable signals of the new value's priority for decisions, etc. – is not something that a superior can do on a whim. Again, for WeWork's aim of mitigating climate change-related harms, this would mean ensuring that corporate travel policies, among many other aspects of the company's internal affairs, are crafted to support this aim. Or for the managers that wish to restrict morally offensive employee expression, this would imply shifting corporate culture such that, even at informal work events (e.g., happy hours), non-offensive speech is expected and offensive speech is condemned.

Sometimes, though, the extra-organizational values seem to leave no time for changing an organization's aims and values. For instance, in the early days of the COVID pandemic, Ford and General Motors redeployed factories and workers to manufacture ventilators for COVID patients.⁸⁹ Perhaps the value behind this effort – helping alleviate a public health emergency – did not figure

⁸⁸ See Lisa Herzog, "Citizens' Autonomy and Corporate Cultural Power," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 51 (2020): 205-230.

⁸⁹ Reed Albergotti and Faiz Saddiqui, "Ford and GM Are Undertaking a Warlike Effort to Produce Ventilators," *The Washington Post* (April 4, 2020).

into Ford's and GM's organizational values.⁹⁰ If not, then did Ford and GM managers engage in managerial moral activism and fail to treat their employees as equals, on my view, despite the apparent moral urgency to act as they did? Yes, and again, this may be what they were morally required to do, all things considered. Another possibility is that, given how the requirements of relational equality extend beyond what I have outlined here and may include provisions related to the urgent needs of persons, what relational equality requires of superiors in these situations of extreme exigency is to engage in managerial moral activism. If so, we could still view managerial moral activism as proscribed by relational equality in the normal run of cases.

Even if you concede the above points, you might think the worries I have raised about moral activist superiors are overblown, especially when compared to worries we should have about superiors who do not care at all about extra-organizational moral considerations. There are serious concerns about the extent to which contemporary organizations socialize members to focus only on organizational aims and values, at the expense of other interests, concerns, and commitments they maintain. These worries may apply with special force to organizational superiors. Call the person who focuses only on their organization's aims and values "organizationally myopic." If a pressing moral concern – such as the need to mitigate climate change-related harms – falls outside the scope of their organization's aims and values, it will not register in their decision-making. At least the moral activist manager is sensitive to a wider array of moral values.

It is true that the moral activist manager is morally responsive in some ways that an organizationally myopic one is not. But the moral activist manager is liable to suffer from their own form of myopia: a moralistic myopia, by which they are so focused on moral values (e.g., lessening poverty, saving wetlands, sustainability) that they lose sight of the fact that moral values matter only

⁹⁰ Ford's organizational values are broad enough, though, that they could be construed in ways that would entail the value of helping alleviate public health emergencies – see <https://corporate.ford.com/about/purpose.html>. This returns us to the above issue of managers exercising unjustifiable "judicial" authority within organizations.

because people (some of whom suffer from poverty), non-human animals (some of whom live in wetlands), and aspects of the natural world (that ought to be sustained) matter.⁹¹ That is, their attachment to moral values can crowd out the attitudes of respect and care by which we appreciate the fundamental moral importance of people, creatures, and the natural world. Such attitudes make possible the relationships, organizations, and institutions that properly structure our relations to people, creatures, and the natural world and, accordingly, properly shape our response to moral values – sometimes, by leading us to give less weight to some of them. The moral activist manager resists such relational restraint on their pursuit of moral values.

How do the dangers of such a moralistic myopia compare to those of organizational myopia? One reason to be more concerned about the former is that the latter can be corrected simply by organizations coming to have a more diverse range of aims and values – a trend that we already see among firms in the U.S.⁹² Moralistic myopia is a problem with someone's basic orientation to moral considerations. Even if we encourage the moralistically myopic to pay attention to the right aims and values, they will care about those values in the wrong way. If they do not care about the fundamental bearers of moral import by cultivating the requisite attitudes of respect, care, and love, then they exhibit a failure that is much more difficult to correct.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109 (1999): 338-374, Simon Keller, *Partiality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁹² Consider, for instance, the increasing significance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and "B Corp" status for firms, as summarized in Elsa Diez Busto, Lidia Sanchez-Ruiz, and Ana Fernandez-Laviada, "The B Corp Movement: A Systematic Literature Review," *Sustainability* 13 (2021): 2508.